

# Module 6

## Features

### Introduction

In this module, you will have the opportunity to review the unique features of health promotion to which you were initially introduced in Module 1. To illustrate how these features shape health promotion practice, this module includes a case study which illustrates a comprehensive approach to community health issues.

You will have the opportunity to explore six sections in this module.

#### **Introduction**

#### **Learning Outcomes**

#### **Reflective Exercise: Recognizing Health Promotion Features in Your Practice**

#### **Content Discussion**

- A Recap of Key Features of Health Promotion
- Case Study: Health Education in Action: Broadening the Scope

#### **Reflective Exercise: Incorporating Key Features in Health Promotion Practice**

#### **Readings and Resources**

# Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, you will:

- describe, and make distinctions between, the key distinguishing features of health promotion practice;
- understand how these features influence the ways in which health promoters enable individuals, groups and communities to take action on the factors contributing to their health; and
- incorporate these features into the planning and implementation of health promotion initiatives.

# **Reflective Exercise**

## **Recognizing Health Promotion Features in Your Practice**

Before you start working through this module, consider the following questions and contribute to your Reflective Journal.

### **Points to Ponder**

1. Which of the key health promotion features introduced in Module 1 have you incorporated in your practice?
2. Which of the learning outcomes do you think might be most important for you?

# Content Discussion

## A Recap of Key Features of Health Promotion

You'll recall from Module 1 that health promotion has a number of unique features. These features distinguish it from other approaches to ensuring the health and well-being of individuals and communities, such as **population health** and **disease prevention**. To recap, these features include:

- a **holistic** view of health
- a focus on **participatory approaches**
- a focus on the **determinants of health**, the social, behavioural, economic and environmental conditions that are the root causes of health and illness
- building on existing **strengths and assets**, not just addressing health problems and deficits
- using **multiple, complementary strategies** to promote health at the individual and community level.

To illustrate the ways in which these features shape health promotion practice, consider the following case study.

## **Case Study**

### **Health Education in Action: Broadening the Scope**

Let's quickly re-visit this case introduced in Module 5.

#### **The Challenge**

Yolanda is a public health nurse working for a health unit in a large urban centre in Ontario. Her challenge is to provide educational opportunities for expectant and new mothers to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to give their children a healthy start in life. Many of these parents are considered "at-risk" because they face barriers to good health such as low-income, social isolation and limited employment skills.

#### **Action Taken**

Yolanda coordinates a program that offers pre- and post-natal classes for parents and caregivers. Through this program, she works closely with a group of outreach workers who are community parents living in the area.

Participants meet every week. At the end of each class, participants identify the topics they want addressed at the next session. In response to their information needs, Yolanda covers topics such as the birthing process, breastfeeding, healthy eating during and after pregnancy, smoking, drugs, alcohol, healthy child development, making baby food, and parenting skills. To ensure that participants have adequate resources to meet their nutritional needs, food and milk vouchers are provided. Participants are reimbursed for their transportation costs to and from the classes. The program also provides access to childcare so participants can attend the classes.

#### **But the story does not end there....**

Now let's see what happens as Yolanda and the community broaden their definition of the problem and tackle new health issues.

#### **The Challenge**

While the women were satisfied with the classes, there was a growing concern that other important health issues in the community were not being addressed. Over time, discussions held during the classes focused on other barriers to health faced by participants and their families, such as a lack of recreation facilities for young children and a shortage of affordable day care spaces. While many of the women expressed their need to get a job and support their families once their children were old enough,

they were concerned that barriers such as a lack of proficiency in English and a lack of job training programs in the community would limit their ability to do so.

### **Action Taken**

In response to the needs expressed by participants, Yolanda contacted several community service agencies in the neighbourhood. The people who Yolanda spoke with shared her concerns about the issues raised by the participants in her class. Yolanda collaborated with the other agencies to organize a community-wide forum at the auditorium of one of the local public schools. This event resulted in the formation of an inter-sectoral committee made up of agency representatives and community residents.

Over the next two years, the committee pursued the following activities in response to the needs and priorities identified by community members.

- One of the partner agencies provided parents with access to computers so they could develop resumés and upgrade their computer skills.
- Another partner agency started several ESL classes.
- A successful proposal for funding allowed a local day care centre to offer free half-day 'play-days' twice a week for children aged 2-4.
- Residents successfully lobbied the city to clean and up-grade playground facilities in two community parks.
- The committee applied for, and received, a community services grant to offer a summer camp for preschool children.
- The local library expanded its story telling program to include local language stories every week.
- During the summer, the committee organized monthly barbecues as a fun social event for community residents.
- Yolanda's agency set up an education and support group for new fathers.

### **Implications for Practice**

This example incorporates the key features of health promotion practice, including:

- **a holistic view of health** that went beyond the physical health status of new and expectant mothers and children to encompass the social and mental dimensions of health and well-being

- a focus on **participatory approaches** that entailed the direct involvement of community members in planning and implementing activities in response to their shared health concerns

- **a focus on the determinants of health** through activities addressing the social, economic and environmental factors contributing to health such as employment, recreation, social support, literacy skills, healthy child development and access to childcare
- **building on existing strengths and assets** by making use of existing community resources and facilities wherever possible and building on the capacity of community residents
- **using multiple, complementary strategies**, including health education, self-help/mutual aid, organizational change, community mobilization and advocacy

# **Reflective Exercise**

## **Incorporating Key Features in Health Promotion Practice**

Think about your learning, consider these questions and compare your thoughts now with those you described in your Journal when you completed the Reflective Exercise at the beginning of this module.

### **The Scenario**

Liz is a dietician working at a community health centre serving a large seniors population. Over the past two years, she has received a number of requests for comprehensive nutrition information, both from seniors and caregivers in the community. In her efforts to respond to these requests, Liz notices that there are very few nutrition education resources focusing on older adults. She is committed to developing an educational resource to meet this information deficit. At the same time, she realizes that nutrition education for seniors in her community needs to be part of a broader comprehensive health promotion initiative to avoid the “tea and toast” syndrome (seniors eating nutritionally deficient and unbalanced meals), and to support independence among older adults living in the community.

Liz decides that a comprehensive health promotion initiative is in order.

### **Points to Ponder**

1. What practical advice could you give Liz in order to ensure that her plans around a comprehensive health promotion initiative incorporate each of the key health promotion features discussed in this module?
2. How does this scenario relate to your own experience with addressing health issues in your organization or community?

## Readings and Resources

You can find out more about health promotion features at this **online resource**.

Health Canada. **Health Promotion in Canada: A Case Study**. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 1997.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/healthpromotiondevelopment/pube/hprpte.pdf>

For those of you who may want more information on Health Promotion features, **these additional printed materials** may be of interest. If they are not available at your local library, you could consider requesting them through Inter Library Loan.

Raeburn, J., and Rootman, I. **People-Centred Health Promotion**. Toronto: Wiley, 1997.

Seedhouse, D. **Health Promotion: Philosophy, Prejudice and Practice**. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1997.